

Stewart Henderson: The Parent Project

In this installation Stewart Henderson addresses the question, “How much do our parents influence what we do in our creative lives?” A Connecticut native, Henderson attributes his love for art from his mother and his deep appreciation for the world around him from his father. The New Yorker magazine covers, the canoe, and recordings of bird songs included in this work belonged to Henderson’s parents and were left to the artist after their deaths in 2002 and 2003. “This is not a portrait of my mother and father,” says Henderson, rather “a collaboration with my parents.”

The 322 New Yorker covers in the piece were collected by Henderson’s mother between 1948 and 1954, the year Henderson was born, and again between 1972 and 1976, the year Henderson left home for college. In the installation, they function as an illustrated timeline of social and political events of the day as well as a symbolic reference to Henderson’s mother, who was a magazine and newspaper editor.

The 16 foot Old Town canoe and recorded bird songs represent Henderson’s father, who was an avid outdoorsman, but who “remained a civilian to the art world.” Henderson’s presence in the installation is represented by the painting, “Groovy,” from his Linear Collage series, which he was working on at the time of his parent’s death. The series explored the viewer’s inherent ability to connect disparate images in search of order.

Henderson, who lives in Northport, Maine, is represented by the Caldbeck Gallery in Rockland and was featured in a one-person exhibition at the Farnsworth Art Museum in 2006.